

A photograph of children looking at a large, colorful map on a wall. One child's hand is pointing at a specific location on the map. The map shows various geographical features and colors, including green, brown, and blue.

# *School Parent Involvement to Increase Student Achievement*

*IO1 - Evidence review on Mentoring models to engage  
disadvantaged parents in their children's schooling*



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*“Even an abusive parent wants the best for their child”*

*(Andrea Gruber, Pressley Ridge Hungary)*

## Introduction

This report presents the first intellectual output (IO1) of the Parent'r'us project. The Parent'r'us project foresees the creation of a mentoring programme targeting parents, teachers and key-community educators. The goal is to empower parents, especially from a low socio-economic background, in order to help them fulfilling their best potential, and acknowledge they determine. In the consortium Romanian, Portuguese, Hungarian, Spanish, and an international organization and universities are participating.

IO1 has been jointly produced by the whole project consortium. It summarizes approaches to and successful examples of parental engagement / involvement of vulnerable parents in the learning of their children, gives an overview of successful methodologies and examples of mentoring targeting vulnerable people. To this end literature resources and inspiring practices have been collected and then analyzed, with the following aims:

2. **Draw a clear picture of the state-of-art research around parental engagement and involvement** to offer a theoretical basis for the work of the project consortium. The related literature review has been done with those parents in focus who traditionally are more difficult to reach for the school and/or considered less successful in supporting their children's learning.
3. **Elaborate on certain cases of successful parental engagement / involvement**, i.e. mainly EU, nationally or locally funded projects. The rationale behind the intensive search of such cases was to identify practices that combine parental engagement practices with mentoring to not 'reinvent the wheel' and have a valid starting point for other Parent'r'Us intellectual outputs in order to work towards social inclusion and provision of equitable opportunities to education.
4. **Assess and describe mentoring models** that have proven to be successful in other contexts, to analyze them from the project's point of view in order to provide a methodological basis for the work of the Consortium.

Methodically authors worked on the basis of desk research, a combination of research literature review and an analysis of inspiring practices with a proven positive track record. Desk research was carried out as a secondary research based on available and recent research evidence on parental engagement, programmes and initiatives in the field with a proven track record of effectiveness, approaches and initiatives that has proven to be ineffective in the case of vulnerable parents, available mentoring methodology. The aim of this desk research is to inform intellectual outputs of the Parent'r'us project in order to implement the most promising approaches and methodology as well as to avoid repeating failures.

In the first three sections (1. Parental engagement, 2. Successful parental engagement practices, 3. Mentoring) the authors make a desk research report of parental engagement and mentoring, and in the last part (4. Recommendations) they have made an attempt to summarize advantages, challenges and elements that need attention of in implementing a mentoring model for parental engagement, especially in the learning of individual children.

## 1. Parental engagement

### *Parental involvement and parental engagement*

**Parents are the primary educators of their children.** This statement is a twofold one: on the one hand there is no need for research to prove that parents are the first to educate their children from birth, there is also a solid body of evidence showing that up to about 11 years of age parents have the largest impact of the learning outcomes of their children, even if it seems that the child is independent, and the parents have no influence on her. (Desforges 2003.) This role is then taken over by the peer group, but parents still remain the second most impacting group. Thus, for the educational and learning success of the individual child, parental attitudes are crucial.

In the next section we quote research around parental involvement and parental engagement, the first being an invitation taking part in something that is already in place and the latter one being a co-creation procedure between partners – namely school and home – mutually recognizing each other's role and impact and working in partnership around learning. Although it is beyond the scope of this review, it is important to mention that in modern pedagogy that considers the child rights this can

only be designed in a participatory way with regards to children as competent partners (see the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The difference between involving and engaging parents can be described as below:

<i>Involvement</i>	<i>Engagement</i>
<b>Who</b>	
Parents	Parents and children + family and community
<b>Responsibility</b>	
School with teaching in center	School, parents, learner with learning in center
<b>How</b>	
School initiative, formal meetings	Flexibility of form and timing
<b>Communication</b>	
One-way school to home	Two-way, use of technology

(Salamon, 2017)



## *The benefits and types of parental engagement with schooling*

In developed countries, the role which parents are expected to play in their children's schooling has changed significantly over the past 20-30 years. Parents are now pressured to be engaged, acting as "...quasi-consumer and chooser in educational 'marketplaces'" and "monitor and guarantor of their children's engagement with schooling" (Selwyn 2011). Research evidence (Harris and Goodall, 2008, Desforges & Abouchar, 2003) also shows it clearly that parental involvement results in better outcomes for young people. This makes it imperative to involve parents in schooling and this approach has gained widespread political traction in many European countries.

However, defining what is meant by parental involvement/engagement in schooling, the kind of interactions and methods most likely to benefit children, the role and responsibility of players, especially that of parents, teachers and school heads, remain somewhat controversial. Politicians, researchers, schools, teachers and parents' groups and children have failed to settle on shared definitions or priorities that sometimes lead to confusion. Although often presented as a "unified concept" parental involvement/engagement "has a range of interpretations, which are variously acceptable or unacceptable by different constituents" (Crozier, 1999: 219). Different stakeholders often use this fact in a way that leads to power struggles and tensions between different stakeholders (ibid 220), and sometimes also lead to some kind of a 'blame game'. As Harris and Goodall's 2008 study of parental interaction in schools illustrates, whilst parents were more likely to understand their involvement as support for their children and children, in turn, saw their parents as 'moral support', teachers viewed it as a "means to 'improved behavior and support for the school'" (2008: 282). This leads to a split between expectations of schools towards parents and vice versa.

Epstein's (2002) classification of practice has been widely used in establishing a typography for parental involvement with school. It is important to take note of the fact that Epstein goes beyond the notion of involvement or engagement in learning of the individual child, but rather introduces the notion of partnership schools that are governed based on a mutual, balanced appreciation of home and school that has a major impact on establishing participatory leadership structures.

Epstein's Framework (2002:6) defines six types of involvement:

<p>1. <b>Parenting:</b> practices that establish a positive learning environment at home</p>	<p>2. <b>Communicating:</b> parent-school communication about school programs and students' progress</p>	<p>3. <b>Volunteering:</b> parents' participation and volunteering opportunities in school</p>
<p>4. <b>Learning at home:</b> parent and school communication regarding learning activities at home</p>	<p>5. <b>Decision making:</b> parent engagement in school decision making and governance</p>	<p>6. <b>Collaborating with the community:</b> parents' access to community resources that increase student learning opportunities</p>

It is important to state that these types have no hierarchy whatsoever, although they are often seen by some schools and teachers as levels of different value and formulating unfounded expectations towards parents whose need for engagement is different (Hamilton 2011.)

Goodall and Montgomery (2013) have argued for a more refined approach that moves interest away from parents' interactions with school generally towards a more specific focus on children's learning. They make a key distinction between involvement and engagement suggesting that the latter invokes a "feeling of ownership of that activity which is greater than is present with simple involvement" (2013: 399) and propose a continuum that moves from parental involvement with schooling to parental engagement with children's learning. This approach includes the recognition that learning is not confined to school and the importance of supporting the learning of children inside and outside school. This approach can be particularly important in the case of parents (and of course children) from ethnic minorities, with low levels of education (and bad experiences with their own schooling) or those facing economic difficulty who, research has shown (ibid 400), are more likely to find involvement in school difficult but who nevertheless have strong commitments to their children's learning. This is a key issue to consider when designing mentoring models for parents in the Parent'r'us project.

Goodall (2017) urges for a paradigm shift towards a partnership that is based on the following principles formulated on the basis of reimagining Freire's banking model of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century's reality:

- 1. School staff and parents participate in supporting the learning of the child**
- 2. School staff and parents value the knowledge that each brings to the partnership.**
- 3. School staff and parents engage in dialogue around and with the learning of the child**
- 4. School staff and parents act in partnership to support the learning of the child and each other**
- 5. School staff and parents respect the legitimate authority of each other's roles and contributions to supporting learning**

According to Kendall (2018) these frameworks acknowledge the complex, dynamic nature of relationships between parents, school and children's learning and open meaningful opportunities for dialogue and re-negotiation of roles and responsibilities they may not go beyond questioning traditional paradigm of home-school relations. Re-imagining home-school relations need to be based on reflection on the purpose of learning and going beyond the immediate and often narrow priorities of schools, based on testing and other policy accountabilities (Grant, 2009:14). Grant reminds us that "reframing children's lives outside school and family life purely in terms of an educational project" could lead to the "worst case scenario" of children being "continuously worked on by ambitious parents and teachers" (Grant, 2009:14). Grant goes on to suggest, many parents may choose, quite reasonably, to invest in insulating the boundaries between school and home life seeing "part of their role as protecting children from school's incursions into the home and ensuring that children socialize, play and relax as well as learn" (ibid).

This leads to the necessity to explore reasons of non-involvement or low levels of involvement with schooling when designing any intervention on parental empowerment.

### ***The role of teachers in boosting parental engagement (Goodall, 2018)***

1. Usually the school staff needs to take the first step towards parents, in order to successfully engage them.
2. Teachers need to assure parents, that they are on the same side, both wanting the best for the child.
3. Teachers should avoid judging and labeling parents and be ready to understand the full picture. Every parent (and teacher) is different, everybody has different skills and strength. When parents are handled as partners, not problems, their skills can be utilized and exploited for the benefit of the learning of the child.
4. Teachers have to realize, that most of the parents are already doing a lot to help the learning their child, these activities need to be recognized, praised and built on. Assuring parents that their efforts have a serious effect on the child's development can be a great encouragement and motivation for them to do more.
5. Teachers and the school staff have to be easily accessible and available for conversations, questions. Teachers should use a language, that is understandable for each parent, jargon can be frightening, and it undermines the partner relationship.
6. Teachers should encourage a whole school approach; it helps when everybody is going to the same direction. (L. Ritók, 2017)

### ***Working with 'hard-to-reach' parents***

The term 'hard-to-reach' has often been used to 'label' and pathologize "parents who are deemed to inhabit the fringes of school, or society as a whole—who are socially excluded and who, seemingly, need to be 'brought in' and re-engaged as stakeholders (Crozier and Davis, 2007). Although the label has been discussed and tackled in recent literature and practice, it remains an enduring concept in policy and practice discourses in Europe (Hamilton 2017:301) and may have particular implications for the target group of the Parent'r'us project. Campbell (2011) defines 'hard to reach' parents as those who: "have very low levels of engagement with school; do not attend school meetings nor respond to communications; exhibit high levels of inertia in overcoming

perceived barriers to participation” (2011:10). The term is often used to refer to parents who fail to reproduce the attitudes, values and behaviors of a ‘white middle class’ norm described in Desforges above, which, argue Crozier and Davies (2007), underpins consciously or unconsciously, school expectations. Here we see the definition used pejoratively to describe the deficit characteristic of ‘non-responsive’ which is explicitly linked to economic status, class and ethnicity, serving to stigmatize and ‘other’ particular groups of parents.

Goodall and Montgomery (2013) discuss the situation of **parents who are often ‘labelled’ as ‘hard-to-reach’ because school may not yet have facilitated an appropriate or effective way of building relationships with them.** Findings from the Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement Project (EPRA) indicated that for some parents, often those characterized as ‘hard-to-reach’, schools, especially secondary school, can be experienced as a “closed system”, as hostile or disorientating, due perhaps to the parent’s own experiences of school or wider structural relations that they may feel position them negatively in relation to the ‘authority of school’ (Harris and Goodall, 2008).

Goodall and Montgomery also demand that attention is paid to the way social and cultural issues positions different groups of parents in relation to schooling. Citing Reay’s (2000) work Harris and Goodall (2008) draw attention to the way that middle class parents tend to increase their positional ambition to ensure they maintain a relative advantage as the educational aspirations of the lower classes rise. This they argue ensures that barriers continue to be manufactured as others, for example access to education, are broken down.

### ***Bursting myths around impactful engagement***

Desforges’ (2002) systematic review of the realized benefits of parental involvement on children’s school attainment establishes the degree of significance of this. He found that whilst parents engaged in a broad range of activities to promote their children’s educational progress (including sharing information, participating in events and school governance) **degree of parental involvement was strongly influenced by social class and the level of mothers’ education: the higher the class and level of maternal educational qualification the greater the extent and degree of involvement.** In addition, the review also noted that low levels of parental self-confidence, lack of understanding of ‘role’ in relation to education, psycho-socio and material deprivation also impacted negatively on levels of participation in school life **with some parents simply being “put off involvement by memories of their own school experience or by their interactions with their children’s teachers or by a combination of both”**

(2003:87), or in some cases the parents never attended formal education themselves and have no school experience. (Ivanova, 2013, Ives and Lee, 2018) The review concluded that whilst quality interactions with school (for example information sharing and participation in events and governance) are characteristic of positive parental involvement in education, a child's school attainment was more significantly bound up with a complex interplay of a much broader range of social and cultural factors, including "good parenting in the home...the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfillment and good citizenship; (2002:5). **Identifying 'at-home good parenting' as the key factor in determining children's attainment** the review found that this form of involvement "works indirectly on school outcomes by helping the child build a pro-social, pro-learning self-concept and high educational aspirations" (2003:87) and had a much greater impact on achievement than the effects of school in the early years of schooling in particular. Grouping these factors together as 'spontaneous parental involvement' the report contrasted the positive correlation with children's attainment they combined to secure, with the effects of "interventions that aim to enhance "spontaneous levels of engagement" (ibid 5). Although the extent and variety of intervention activity, which included parenting programmes, home-school links and family and community education, was noted to be substantial the review was not able to find a positive correlation between these activities and attainment data and suggested they were "yet to deliver the achievement bonus that might be expected."

Price-Mitchell highlights an over-emphasis on school learning as the only, or priority, objective of home/school interactions. As such schools offer a 'mechanistic view' which separates educators and parents rather than connecting them with "educators see[ing] themselves as experts" in children's learning "rather than equals" (2009:5). According to her this creates hierarchical relationships and limits capacity to understand and develop partnerships that create new knowledge. (2009:8)

Price-Mitchell pays attention to the way that social capital circulates within the context of school and its potential to include or exclude parents from different social and cultural groups. Citing Santana & Schneider (2007) Mitchell-Price suggests that "lower income and ethnically diverse parents who traditionally have less access to resources for their children benefit greatly from social networks as a way of accruing benefits otherwise unavailable to them" (2009:19). Hamilton argues that this requires teachers to develop an 'outreach mentality' (2017:313) going beyond "promoting awareness among parents of rules and expectations" towards deep, reflexive exploration of their own socio-cultural positionality as a 'teacher' and representative of authority, and taking responsibility for the agency they have in the processes and practices of home school interaction.

## *Family learning provisions*

The educational provision of Family learning has been alluded to in some of the literature so far. The official definition of family learning by the Luxembourgish EU presidency is “The aim of Family Learning is to develop a culture of learning in families and to equip parents with the skills to support their children’s education whilst recommitting themselves to education and training.”

At its roots is a social and humanistic approach to learning, with the underpinning principles of ‘parents as educators, the acknowledgement that language is power and the central position of dialogue in education’ (Mackenzie, 2009: 5-6). Traditionally aimed at both disadvantaged families and communities who may be experiencing poverty and social exclusion for a variety of reasons, family learning provision incorporates both hard and soft outcomes. The former based on improvements in the parent and child’s attainment levels in literacy and numeracy and developing employment skills for the parent, whilst the latter in the form of improved confidence, interpersonal skills, and improved mental and physical well-being.

Family learning initiatives are however only useful for the target group of the Parents’rus project, if they focus on learning, and the school is willing to change as well for the benefit of the children.

While they may not have a direct impact on the learning outcomes of children (see above), these provisions are useful tools to support the lifelong learning of parents.

## **2. Successful parental engagement practices**

### *European policies on parental involvement*

Several reports and studies (EC, 2012; OECD, 2006, 2009 and 2012a and Eurostat, 2014, MEMA 2017) confirm that significant obstacles still exist in the educational pathways of children with a migrant or Roma background in the educational systems of the EU Member States. Most EU Member States have developed, to some degree, educational policies for migrant and Roma children, however differences in the depths, extent and support of these measures show major differences (MEMA 2017). Eurydice has reported that high percentages of disadvantaged (especially migrant and Roma) children experience discrimination in school systems, and in most countries a clear

achievement gap is also clearly present. This is accompanied by an increase of intolerance and xenophobia in most EU Member States.

At the same time successful, mostly local or municipality-level initiatives show that there are effective solutions for these issues that are best tackled together. Some countries have implemented effective national policies and practices for inclusion in education (e.g. Ireland, Austria, Norway), but none have introduced a systemic approach to vulnerable parents' inclusion.

In Ireland, in 2011 the 'Inclusive Education Framework – A guide for schools on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs' was published by the National Council for Special Education. The framework comes with tools which enable to schools to show what they are doing well, identify areas where they need to improve, rate their levels of inclusion and put plans in place to address the areas for improvements.

In Austria, inclusive education is already part of the teacher training, however only elective subject so far. ' Since the winter semester of 2016, the North-East Schools' Group (a cooperation between the University of Vienna and the University College of Teacher Education in Vienna, the University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria and the University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches Vienna/Krems) offers the new teacher education programme at secondary level. The specialisation in inclusive education (focus on impairments), which students can select as an alternative to a teaching subject, has been newly established. So far, the offer is only available at the bachelor's level, but a master's programme is in planning. '

In his paper Rolf. B. Fasting (2012) reviewed the Norwegian pathway to inclusive and efficient education, and concludes that the conflict between "the expectation of increasing all pupils' yield from education and the development of inclusive schools – schools for all – where individual differences are acknowledged and respected." is still unresolved, and creates contradictory and confusing situations for the teaching staff, the pupils and their families.

### *Inspiring European practices in the field of parental inclusion*

All successful projects and initiatives in the field of parental involvement include an element that helps to overcome language/vocabulary barriers and also support inclusion of the parents themselves in society. However, successful, long-term engagement programs often build on the acceptance of differences in languages and culture made visible in school settings.



Another type of program that is in place in many local contexts is aiming at raising cultural awareness and create mutual understanding by that. Inviting parents into school settings to introduce their home cultures create more trust in school. This is especially important in the case of parents who have low levels of education themselves. It is often necessary for school staff to leave their comfort zone and the school premises for successful outreach to parents with migrant background.

The most successful and sustainable programmes (e.g. SEAs or Schools as Community Learning Centres) tackle the whole community as one, consider language and cultural differences, but offer a holistic solution.

There are two main aims of parental involvement/engagement that were explored in inspiring practices and related literature. One is the engagement of parents in the learning of their own children for better learning outcomes, the other is engagement in school life as a form of active citizenship. The second, broader approach necessarily includes the first one, parents engaged in school life also understand the importance of learning and support their own children more. At the same time, it must be mentioned that deeper engagement in your own children's learning can be successful without more engagement in school, especially if the intervention is aiming at parents' understanding of learning processes, their role as primary educators and the fact that school plays only a minor role in the learning of children.

Inspiring practices in some cases focus on a certain narrow target group, for example parents of a certain nationality or level of education, while others have a more holistic approach, targeting all migrants or all parents that are generally difficult to reach and engage. Inspiring practices collected during the needs analysis period show that successful models are transferable from one target group to the other, e.g. Roma programmes and migrant-centred ones often use very similar methodologies.

Recommendations and methods developed in previous projects, such as Includ-ED (see Annex nr. 35) as well as FamilyEduNet (see Annex nr. 17), building on methodology developed in the Includ-ED project and partnership school's methodology offer a useful universal source that the Parents'rus project can build on. It supports an approach, where all interested parties participate in designing and implementing inclusion activities. It tackles both sides of parental engagement – in learning and in school life.

Parent Involvement 3.0 is a useful general handbook to help teachers and school heads understand the importance and possible tools of parental involvement. The methods

suggested can be implemented by school leadership even in systems, where school autonomy is on a low level.

Schools as Community Learning Centres is an initiative that is very much in line with current polity trends, but implementing it needs full school autonomy and a school leader committed to it. However, even individual teachers may be able to implement certain aspects building on local community.

A simple assessment tool on parental involvement developed by NPC-p, Ireland can be used for awareness-raising as well as monitoring development in practice.

ParentHelp (see Annex nr. 36) trainings show that its activities are equally useful for parent leaders, teachers and school heads to understand parental involvement/engagement, embrace diversity and be able to manage challenges.

### 3. Mentoring

The aim of this section is to explore what good mentors and good mentees can do toward achieving successful outcomes along their transformational journeys, to address specific features of effective mentoring and to present how mentoring can help social inclusion.

#### *Concept of Mentoring*

**Mentoring is a competence development-based process**, combining guidance, counselling and coaching processes, which has been proven successful in terms of promoting excluded groups employability and social inclusion. Mentoring is not a professional relationship with a client nor a formal education. It's a relationship over a period of time between an individual possessing a greater share of experience, knowledge, or power and a mentee (recipient), who is, in most cases, in a vulnerable position to benefit from the skills and abilities of the mentor (Tolan et al, 2008).

Mentoring is a process, which involves the interaction between two individuals in which the mentee (apprentice) is in a position to benefit from the knowledge, skill, ability, or experience of the mentor. It can take on two types: peer and non-peer, meaning that a peer mentor is an individual who shares the same characteristics of the mentor: age, life story, experience (Finnegan et al, 2010). Most mentoring programs focus on the development of soft skills, such as self-esteem, resilience, self-efficacy, while requiring also hard outcomes connected to the field of intervention - crime reduction, education, employability (Colley, 2003a; Colley, 2003b). A **dinstinctive feature of mentoring is the value assigned to the relational component**, regardless of the type of methodology applied in the mentoring itself. The construction of the mentor-mentee relationship and mentor and mentee's motivations are important to understand how the process of mentoring is developed and it determines the achievement of results (Colley, 2003c).

#### *Outcomes from previous programmes*

Mentoring was chosen in the project, as it is a well-tested, often used method of social inclusion. The Parents'rus project built on the intellectual outcomes regarding mentoring of previous projects developed by European professionals, such as:

MOMIE: Models of Mentoring for Inclusion and Employment (2009-2011), focused on comparing peer and non-peer mentoring;

MEGAN: Evaluation of the Mentoring for Excluded Groups and Networks (2012-2014), dedicated to the creation of a mentoring model for excluded groups;

MPATH: Mentoring Pathways Towards Employment (2015-2017), targeting low skilled and long-term unemployed for job place access and retention.

MOMIE and MEGAN projects proved that mentoring has a positive impact on mentees. These two programmes were successful in the improvement of self-trust, social skills and social networks of support, and they highlighted the relevance of mentor-mentee matching and the ability of mentors to provide additional support in problem solving situations (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, s.d.; Finnegan, et al., 2012). Additionally, a master thesis developed within the work of Aproximar showed that the outcomes of MOMIE and MEGAN projects last for at least 2 years, being the most valued skills: self-trust and proactivity. These two skills enabled mentees to get more control on their own lives and increased their ability to deal with challenges, overcome obstacles and achieve their life goals. (Master thesis Aproximar, 2016). MPATH identified as a positive outcome also the increase on soft skills related to motivation (in this case for job searching or performance development); in Portugal, MPATH showed that mentoring allowed for mentees to develop themselves and improve skills (MPATH; Country Pilot Report – Portugal, 2017)

### ***Building on evidence***

Mentoring has become a key skill that is considered to be a long-term adult developmental process used in a wide range of contexts in order to promote support and interpersonal growth, to assist learning; to help weaker students or those with specific learning needs or difficulties; to develop community links among participants etc. Therefore, it is considered a strategy to share intellectual and emotional resources centred around the participants' relationships; it is also defined as an active process and a transactional relationship involving higher professional development and life-long learning among the parties involved: mentor, mentee/ protégé, organisation.

Furthermore, mentoring differs by context, features and roles. It may be either task centred, social support centred, or career guidance centred. It may be affected by organisational, occupational, positional and interpersonal variables. The mentoring process should be carefully planned and implemented; it should be outcome based

because it is built on the goals and the investments of the involved partners. The mentoring relationship is at the core of a successful mentoring experience. This relationship helps cultivate more effective communication skills, movement toward application of theoretical concepts and knowledge, healthy relationships with peers, critical thinking skills, self-sufficiency and a deep understanding of professional identity and role. Mentoring schemes help parties involved to look at alternatives and options, to offer help and advice as well as to get someone else's perspective on the issue. Thus, effective mentoring requires understanding the needs of the mentee.

A literature review by KPMG (2013) concluded that mentoring can have a positive and lasting effect on young people. The collective findings of the literature reviewed in the report suggested that youth mentoring can provide benefits including:

- Positive effects on intermediate outcomes, such as mental health, which may in turn have a positive effect on outcomes such as recidivism.
- Improvements in mentee attitude and behaviour.
- Improvements in interpersonal relationships and integration into the community.
- Increased social inclusion
- Improved relationships with peers and parents.
- Improved health outcomes, including improved mental health and reduced substance misuse.
- Decreased youth violence
- Some reductions in recidivism
- Some improvements in academic achievement and integration into education and training.

### Role of Mentors

Using mentors who have ‘been there, done that’ was identified as a success factors in the KPMG (2013) literature review. In addition, an evaluation of a mentoring programme for BME youth in the UK (Bartlett, 2012) found that the longer an individual had been a mentor the better the improvements in outcomes for the mentee.

In Schafer’s book *The Vanishing Physician-Scientist* (2009), the researcher refers to the six roles of a mentor who acts as an adviser, agent, confidant, role model, sponsor and teacher. It is as the adviser, that the mentor helps the mentee “refine ideas and get clarity of thought.” (Schafer, 2009)

In Cluttebuck’s opinion (2017:6), “effective mentors help the mentees understand their inner world, fostering their ability to become more self-aware of their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, aspirations, fears, self-limiting beliefs and so on”. For instance, the authors of the article entitled “Nature’s guide for mentors” (Lee, A. et al. 2007) highlight generic traits of good mentors, such as enthusiasm, availability, hard-work and inspiring for others, encouraging skill development, as well as personal characteristics such as respect, unselfishness, appreciating individual differences, support etc. It also includes a useful set of self-assessment questions aimed at encouraging reflection on one’s mentoring and at identifying areas for improvement. A successful mentor should be someone who is constantly available to the mentee for guidance and advice, is consistent, resourceful and reliable in his or her work and feedback being professional both within and outside the mentoring relationship (Price, 2004). The impact of a good mentor goes far beyond his or her own limitations.

The main role of adult mentors is to support youth develop self-efficacy, described as a belief in oneself. Thus, mentors accomplish this through a wide range of strategies such as: supporting and encouraging; listening; setting high expectations and pushing; showing interest in youth as individuals separate from academics or civic activities; fostering self-decision-making and providing another perspective during problem-solving (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015). Consequently, specific qualities that turn adults into exceptional mentors, helping youth grow and develop are summarized below:

a. “supportive and encouraging by far [...], particularly as young people struggle to overcome obstacles and solve problems. When young people feel depressed, upset with their families, or unhappy in their life situations, mentors stand beside them,

letting them talk about anything and reminding them of their innate value as human beings.” (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

b. “active listeners. Mentors listen first and speak last. Many teens mentioned how little they feel listened to by most adults. Often, they feel inferior even when they have good ideas. But mentors are different. They always listen, even when they are not obligated to do so.” (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

c. “people who push just enough [...] teens like to have high expectations set for them—both academically and personally. They appreciate when mentors push them beyond what they may have imagined they could accomplish”. (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

d. “authentically interested in youth as individuals [...] Mentors engage youth to understand all aspects of their lives and interests. They value young people’s ideas and honour their changing feelings and moods.” (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

e. “nurturers of self-decision; making good mentors do not judge young people or impose their own beliefs on them. Instead, young people say they remind them who they are and help them believe they have the insights to make good choices. Knowing they are not being judged helps young people think through decisions critically, sifting through the deeper values that will inform the adults they become.” (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

f. “sources of perspective. Adult mentors provide perspective to young people from their additional years of life experience. When obstacles seem overwhelming, mentors help put those challenges in perspective. They also help young people see both sides of a situation, helping model the skills of positive scepticism.” (Price-Mitchell, M. 2015)

A review of the literature suggests other characteristics that ideal mentors might possess such as “the capacity to see the mentee as a special individual and be comfortable with cultural or socio-economic ‘distance’; set high standards and be able to install confidence to aim high; respect the mentee’s ability and right to make his or her own decisions; empathize with and understand the mentee’s struggle; see solutions not just problems; be flexible and open; be able to accept and link to other values, cultures and viewpoints; share resources, experience and knowledge; show interest, mutual respect and affection; show enthusiasm for particular subjects, interest areas and moral issues.” (Miller, A.2002:198)

Furthermore, a useful way of defining mentor behaviours is to describe behaviours that mentors should always, sometimes or never display. For instance, “mentors should:

- a. always: listen with empathy; share experience; form a mutual learning friendship; develop insight through reflection; be a sounding board; and encourage.
- b. sometimes: use coaching behaviours; use counselling behaviours; challenge assumptions; be a role model; open doors or sponsor.
- c. never: discipline; condemn; appraise formally; assess for a third party; supervise.”  
(Miller, A.2002:198)

### *The space for mentoring*

Different authors who have approached the topic of mentoring from differing perspectives discuss the space of mentoring. This concept implies the creation of a location/a place for mentoring. This location can be informal or formal, virtual or face-to-face, and may be structured physically by the leadership of the organization or formed by the employees in less formal settings.

The space of mentoring should be a place in which individuals can gain insight into each other’s needs; a place to stop, learn, reflect, connect; where relationships can be strengthened. Additionally, in these spaces, the role of the mentor and mentee may flip, depending on their discussion and needs. Spaces of mentoring can create great potential for individuals and their organizations. They should turn into places in which trust in individuals and trust in the organization are built; as a result, they can improve the organization’s overall capacity. At the same time, these types of settings may be impromptu locations, thus considering similarities of potential mentor and mentee characteristics such as socioeconomic factors, gender, ethnicity, career levels, or social activism. On one hand, if the space of mentoring is informal, those similarities may emerge naturally between an individual who may become a mentor and the individual who needs mentoring simply via common discussions on interests. On the other hand, if the space of mentoring is formal, then the individuals in management in an organization should be aware of and assist their employees in understanding certain issues in the workplace, such as that of cross-gender mentoring or cross-ethnic mentoring.



### *Mentoring and parenting*

The field of parenting has been in a state of major change and development since the 1990's. Parenting support refers "to any intervention for parents or carers aimed at reducing risks and/or promoting protective factors for their children, in relation to their social, physical and emotional well-being" (Moran, P. et al. 2004: 23). Support for parents comes from a variety of sources, such as informal provided by family, friends, etc., semi-formal, for example, community-based organisations and formal support, i.e. organized services. Two significant aspects of parenting support identified by Gardner (2003) are "prevention of damage" and "promotion of strengths". Research into the relationship between parents and mentoring outcomes suggests that much of the impact on mentoring programs may be due to the role the parent plays. In J. Rhodes' research on mentoring relationships, the author determined that improved parental relationships for mentored youth acted as a mediator of the youth outcomes: "mentoring relationships led to increases in the levels of intimacy, communication, and trust adolescents felt towards their parents. These improvements, in turn, led to positive changes in a wide array of areas, such as the adolescents' sense of self-worth and scholastic achievement" (Rhodes, 2002: 40–41)

Community-based education should be regarded as a partnership between students, schools, and their communities, as they engage youth in authentic experiences within the public domain which result in meaningful learning outcomes. With the support of these programmes, students develop the incentive, knowledge, determination, and commitment that made high educational and occupational goals possible (James, C.E. 2005). Developing a parent mentoring project takes considerable time in planning, recruiting and training mentors, as well as identifying mentees. A flexible and adaptable approach is needed to run a parent mentoring project.

As it has been acknowledged, there are families in our communities at risk for child abuse and/or neglect. These families need guidance to make a positive change for themselves and their families. Parent mentor programmes work with families to bring about constructive change through support, guidance, instruction and/or treatment. A Parent mentor can help families do the best job possible in raising their children. The program recognizes that safety, permanency and wellbeing are essential to achieving a positive outcome for children. Thus, a child's successful transition to adulthood is doubtful without these essential family resources intact.

For example, the main purpose of a project such as "An Integrated Approach Towards Poverty and Social Exclusion on behalf of the Entire Community" which has been developed in Romania by POCU/18/4.1/101910 is to improve children's efficient

participation in the process of education through a selection of strategies and actions that involve a positive change of parents'/ tutors' attitudes towards education; comprehension of the importance of education for their children; implementation of a parenting support programme for vulnerable families and development of mentoring activities.

## 4. Recommendations

The mentoring process, its challenges and benefits were introduced and a summary of the approaches and successful examples of parental engagement and involvement of vulnerable parents in the learning of their children was presented. Based on these two pillars the authors will attempt to summarize advantages, challenges and elements that need attention of implementing a mentoring model for parental engagement, especially in the learning of individual children. The aim of this exercise is to provide the basis of further intellectual outputs.

Mentor programs proved to be a very effective tool for engaging parents, as it can address the individual needs of each family, and deal with the fact, that each of them needs help with something else, but it does it in a format, where the parties are equal, working towards a common goal, the well-being of the child. The parents can use this point of view when they are talking to the teachers of their child, as the teacher and the parents are also partners, with the child in focus.

The mentor program developed and implemented in the project needs to be prepared considering many factors, in order to provide a model that works and is beneficial for all actors - especially children and their parents - but is still customizable in the different regional contexts.

A first and crucial point in any mentoring relationship, that is especially true for the project, is that **mentors and mentees should be treated as equals**. Both sides should be open and aim for lifelong learning. While the fact that primarily the mentee is supported by the mentor, the mentor can and should also gain knowledge, experience in the mentoring process. While the mentors and the mentees will have different skills and qualities, the skills of the mentee should be highlighted and built on. In this case mentors need to have the starting point that acknowledges parents as the people responsible for the education of their children, and successful and highly impactful educators. It is also necessary to aim at making home-school relations work better than before. Thus, the mentoring process should focus on bridging gaps making collaboration between parents and school smooth and supporting both sides to change practices.

A mentoring program is only going to be successful, **if the school does not expect the families to simply assimilate to the existing system, but they are willing to step out their comfort zone and change too**. The school needs to acknowledge, that practices they are used to might need to be refreshed, or in some cases completely reformed. What worked for previous generations or different students, may not work for the

current classes. There are no solutions that fit everyone, the school needs to stay flexible at all times. The teachers and the school staff need mentoring and support, in order to be prepared handling, the parents as partners, and be able to understand and work with the different families.

**Schools also need to understand and acknowledge education done by the parents at home and also consider children's non-formal learning** (e.g. participating at youth organization or church activities). Parents mentored in the course of the project have to be supported to realize that they are doing a good job educating their children and that they are not required to focus on school work as it is not their job to cover for any lack of provision in formal education. Schools and teachers need to learn how they can rely and build on home education and adjust formal education to that.

The **school and mentors should actively reach out to parents and families labelled as 'hard-to-reach'** (or ones they have not yet found the way to reach (Goodall 2017.)), and provide a welcoming space where former and existing bad experiences of parents can be fought. It requires the school and teachers to have an 'outreach mentality', they should not wait for the families to come to them, but explore the reasons why parents might avoid the school, and work on these issues. In order to find a way to 'hard-to-reach' families, the school should be encouraged to use the help of already engaged parents, community leaders, social workers and other professionals.

The **basis of the mentoring relationship should be mutual trust and respect between the partners.** This should never be violated, the mentor is obliged to keep the mentor-mentee confidentiality. Mentees have to be sure, that all the sensitive information, their fears and hopes will not be used against them. Mentors need to be trained, that involving the authorities should be the last option, keeping in mind, that the interests of the child are above all, and in case of their safety is in any danger, the authorities need to be alerted immediately. These families from low socio-economic background may struggle with problems, that they do not dare to share with anybody, fearing that they will lose their children, or get deported. (L.Ritók, 2017)

A **mentor should give full dedication and the best possible support the mentee regardless of their religion, sexual identity, culture, citizenship, status, political views and values.** While during their conversations, different opinions may appear, a mentor should never force her beliefs on the mentee and should respect the differences.

There needs to be a **preliminary agreement on the extent mentors could be involved in home-school relations**. As it is a trustful, professional relationship, mentors should be prepared to be approached by mentees for reasons not strictly related to the mentoring process. For the majority of teachers, it is difficult to communicate with people outside of their social class, and in case of parents with low levels of education they are likely to use vocabulary that alienates these parents even more (L. Ritók 2015.) Mentors may play a facilitator's role between home and school based on this trustful relationship, but it must be agreed on beforehand if this is included in the mentoring process.

The **mentoring program should provide help and solutions, how language/vocabulary barriers can be handled, but at the same time, differences in language and culture should be celebrated** and the families empowered to be able to pass their heritage to their children. In the case of Roma families mentoring may also aim at fostering parents' learning about their own heritage (L. Ritók 2014.) Children should never be made to choose between their families' and the schools' culture or main language, but they should be helped in how to practice both, and built their identity.

The **goals of the mentoring process should be the engagement of parents in the learning of their own children for better learning outcomes, and engagement in school life as a form of active citizenship**. Mentors should not tell parents how to raise their children, shame them for their parental practices, but give them opportunities, tools and courage to participate actively and exercise their rights, as written in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, confidently. The engagement (rather than involvement) approach also means that parents as well as schools need to be empowered to demand and manage change.

In order to keep track of progress, **the mentors and mentees should set up goals and measures, but these should go beyond the performance of tests, and grades of the child**. The program should be able to go further than school learning and look for more meaningful home/school interactions. The evaluation should be mutual and constructive. Mentees should be encouraged to express their doubts, or revulsion concerning the mentor and the mentoring process. Mentees should be motivated to participate actively in the mentoring process, but in case they decide to quit, the possibility should be given, and the reasons carefully examined, in order to avoid future drop-outs. (L.Ritók, 2013)

The **space of mentoring should be a place in which individuals can gain insight into each other's needs**; a place to stop, learn, reflect, connect; where relationships can be strengthened. This may often be outside of the school, to provide a safe space and

comfort to those parents who feel frustrated or powerless in a school building, which is often the case with parents coming from a low socio-economic background. The mentors should be willing and open to set their comfort aside, and choose a place where both mentor and mentee feel safe and empowered. It might be a good opportunity for the mentees to present their own environment to the mentor, so she has a better understanding of their way of life.

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## Annex – Inspiring practices used for the paper

### 1. Empowerment of Roma parents in Međimurje and Sisak-Moslavina County (2011-2013)

1.1. <http://www.korakpokorak.hr>

1.2. The project run in four primary schools, belonging to four communities, whose population in higher than 50% Roma. It was implemented in cooperation with school educators, leadership, education specialists and Roma assistants who at the same time had the important role of community representatives. The project supported the wellbeing and successful development and learning of children, since the vicious circle of exclusion is also determined by low educational achievement of a child. It focused on supporting and developing capacity of parents and school; on one side, this included creating a good home learning environment and on the other, it included strengthening collaboration between school and parents. It was expected to influence the issue of integration and social cohesion.

Parents were educated about different strategies of collaboration with parents, but also about intercultural learning and education for social justice; such feature proved to be crucial not only for the participation of parents from ethnic groups different than the dominant one, but also for improving the quality of entire school. Besides being educated in communication and training skills and pre-literacy and pre-mathematic themes, the facilitators were also 'equipped' with various adapted materials - Children's Activity Sets, Parent Facilitators Guide and Parent Activity Guide, brochures for parents, and picture books. The project team and facilitators organized the follow-up meetings on regular basis: 17 members of the team consisting of Roma assistants, preschool educators, teachers, education specialists and school principals conducted educative workshops for parents and other members of the family on weekly basis for 2 years. The experiences from this project show that parents react extremely positively to this type of activities (interactive educative workshops) and that that they apply the skills and knowledge acquired at the workshops. The data from the attendance sheets showed that over these 2 years around 245 parents and other members of the family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, older siblings etc.) participated continuously at the workshops.

### 2. MPATH – Mentoring Pathways Towards Employment - Low SKILLED AND LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED MENTORING MODEL (2015-2017)

2.1. <http://www.mpath-mentoring.org/>

2.2. The MPATH project is focus on creating a mentoring model to help low skilled & long term unemployed workers to enter in the labour market & maintaining their job place. Mentoring is a competencies development based process, combining guidance, counselling & coaching process, which has been proven successful in terms of promoting excluded groups employability & social inclusion. The promoting partnership has been working successfully in mentoring models since 2009, implementing which provided evidences of mentoring models effectiveness to support employability related skills development.

2.3. MPATH project goals are:

- Develop new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning in context of career guidance in labour market, building on lessons learnt from MOMIE and MEGAN projects’;
- Identify the suitable profile and competencies to support or perform mentoring programs within companies, including delivering it in working contexts;
- Design a Mentoring model to improve competencies, namely with low skilled and long term unemployed workers, to enter in the labour market and maintaining their job place;
- Pilot a mentoring model to support small and medium companies and non-profit organisations (SME/O’s) retaining low skilled and long term unemployed adults (young-adults and adults), increasing the learning curve and productivity of those adults with high difficulties to re-enter in the labour market;
- Perform a randomized control trial to evaluate the mentoring model consistency, both in terms of training courses delivered; train the mentors and train the mentors trainers, mentoring implementation and job place retention.

### 3. Models of Mentoring for Inclusion and Employment (MOMIE)

3.1. [www2.learningandwork.org.uk/node/608](http://www2.learningandwork.org.uk/node/608)

3.2. MOMIE consisted on a Mentoring Project supported by the European Community through the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity -

Progress 2007-2013. At the European level it has been identified as one of 16 case studies of the Community Progress Program Framework 2007-2013. This Project consisted on an approach to Mentoring, as an innovative Methodology to help people in a disadvantage situation and different backgrounds.

### 3.3. Project goals

The action was designed to compare and evaluate the impact of mentoring and peer mentoring in supporting disadvantaged individuals and groups. It had six primary goals:

1. Establish a European network of experts (stakeholders and practitioners) in the field of mentoring as a model for supporting disadvantaged and excluded groups into the labour market
2. Undertake a review of all types of mentoring schemes and the range of target groups across Europe and identify any specific evaluation reports which indicate their effectiveness
3. Agree a common framework to consult with existing peer mentors to identify the key indicators for an effective peer mentoring scheme
4. Conduct a trial with specific excluded groups including a randomised control group
5. Determine clear and common evaluation criteria to provide a robust evidence base
6. Monitor and evaluate the process of identifying and training peer mentors to ensure that governance is appropriate for the national context.

### 4. MEGAN - Evaluation of the Mentoring for Excluded Groups and Networks

4.1. <http://www.aproximar.pt/projeto-megan.html>

4.2. MEGAN is a mentoring project with an evaluation component, financed by the European Social Fund's Progress funding stream. The MEGAN project team's interest area is that of supporting disadvantaged groups, including Roma young people (Hungary), people living in social and economic disadvantage, depending on State Benefits/Minimum Income (Portugal) and offenders on probation, including migrant offenders (UK). MEGAN will deliver mentoring to participants in each country for at least six months and measure what impact this has on the mentees' lives in a number of key areas<sup>2</sup>. MEGAN is hoping to build on its predecessor project, Models of Mentoring for Inclusion and Employment (MOMIE).

### 4.3. Objectives

- To enhance the social inclusion of migrant communities through mentoring;
- To promote effective and cost-efficient strategies to support the social inclusion and employment of vulnerable groups;
- To measure the impact of mentoring on a range of hard (e.g. employment and reoffending) and soft (e.g. confidence and motivation) outcomes for marginalised communities;
- To test the feasibility of conducting a randomised control trial of mentoring to identify impacts.

5. ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence Program (APEX) (ongoing)

5.1. <http://www.aspira.org/book/aspira-parents-excellence-apex>

5.2. The mission of the ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence Program (APEX) is to increase the involvement of Latino parents in their children's education by helping them learn about the intricacies of negotiating change and improving education in their communities.

The APEX Program has served as a model program in the area of community empowerment through parental involvement. The curriculum, which is available in English and Spanish, consists of an intensive workshop series for parents which culminates in a graduation ceremony.

The APEX Workshop Series consists of two manuals, the first of which is the APEX Workshop Series Manual which includes the following ten workshops for parents:

- Self-Esteem
- Why is Education Important?

- The Home Connection
- School Structure
- What Does Parental Involvement Really Mean?
- The Importance of Communication
- Involvement With Schools
- Organizing Parent Networks
- Group Dynamics
- An Effective Facilitator

After completing the workshop series, many APEX graduates choose to enhance their leadership development skills by becoming facilitators of the program. Parents are trained using the Manual for APEX Facilitators. In this way, APEX reaches its goal of training parents to pass on their knowledge to other parents.

### 6. Involve Parents – Improve School- COMENIUS Multilateral Project (2007-2009)

6.1. <http://involve-migrants-improve-school.eu>

6.2. The concepts and materials developed in the project “Involve Parents – Improve School” were intended to qualify teachers to work with parents. Those parents who are in the focus of the project as a target group are those who have so far been outside school where teachers have had only marginal influence. In the course of the project, work concentrated more and more on improving the inclusion of parents with a migration background.

#### 6.3. Materials developed:

-Toolbox “Networking”: it provides course materials on how to create networks to improve education in a school district in the long term, in order to improve the quality of the education process in demographic areas where there is a high multicultural concentration that presents special socio-cultural difficulties.

-Toolbox “Teaching Tolerance”: in this toolbox the idea is to sensitize teachers to the lifestyle of families with a background of migration.



- Toolbox "Collaborating with Parents": This toolbox provides strategies and activities how to successfully contact as many parents as possible. Initially, it gives an example of how to establish the status quo at a school. On the basis of this status quo the toolbox offers a selection of ideas and materials which illustrate how to set up communication with parents with a migration background involving a multilingual approach.

-Toolbox "How to build the bridge": Parent education is also a topic in this toolbox, inasmuch as it is intended to increase parent involvement and to support parents in their efforts to help their children with their school work.

### 7. Aesopos (1999-2009)

7.1. <http://www.eadap.gr/en/2015/11/04/aesop-exploring-intercultural-pedagogical-approach-in-a-multi-cultural-environment-eadap-1999-2005/>

7.2. The "Aesopos" program began in 1999 and lasted 10 years. It includes lines of action on various target groups such as children, parents, the social environment of the school. The aim is to create an intercultural learning environment, which will ensure the exchanges and interactions between people of different ethnic, cultural, social and economic origin. It aims to investigate those approaches, which will contribute to combating discrimination and respect the diversity of children and their families. Within these 10 years the efforts of its members EADAP focused on mainly to approach foreign parents and involve them actively in the activities and life of the kindergarten. They studied and developed techniques to enhance cooperation between educators, children and parents, who shared moments of creativity, collective effort and satisfaction with the outcome in an intercultural school environment.

The actions of the group of educators of the program "Aesopos" have inspired many educational and intercultural content programs recently confirming that cooperation with parents is essential whether multicultural environment or not.

### 7.3. SOME ACTIVITIES

#### 1. First improvised dictionaries for communicating with parents

2. Keywords for communicating with children
  3. Cooking Workshop with flavors from the homelands
  4. Snapshot from one celebration to arranged terrace
  5. Workshops with mothers
  6. Concentration parents
  7. Letters translated and painted by children
  8. Afternoon workshops
  9. Stay on station before departure
  10. Presentation of the day's work to parents
  11. Update the father
  12. Dances from different countries
- 
8. Together/ Promoting creative toddler activities into existing structures of nursery aiming interaction migrant children and indigenous
    - 8.1. [http://www.eadap.gr/el/bwg\\_gallery/together/](http://www.eadap.gr/el/bwg_gallery/together/)
    - 8.2. The implementation of creative activities Infant existing structures of nursery aiming interaction migrant children and indigenous and emphasis on family involvement
  9. "Parent – Teacher Partnership for Children’s Transition to School (2006-2008)
    - 9.1. [http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/transitions/files/2010/09/73.Poland-Parent-Teacher-Partnership\\_profile.pdf](http://blogs.tc.columbia.edu/transitions/files/2010/09/73.Poland-Parent-Teacher-Partnership_profile.pdf)
    - 9.2. An adult education scheme entitled "Parent – Teacher Partnership for Children’s Transition to School" (06-GRC01-S2G01-00034-1 and 07-GRC01-GR04-00064-2). From 2006 to 2008 in cooperation with Poland, Northern Ireland, Slovakia, Czech Republic. The Parent-Teacher Partnership was an effort to promote modern educational approaches and high educational standards among parents, teachers, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, and institutions that serve children. In particular, it aims to increase awareness about the importance of smooth transitions to school. The program involved parents and teachers in the development of early childhood curricula designed to strengthen the links between children’s home and school experiences. A method called the “Project Approach” is used to facilitate this parent-teacher collaboration.

10. Toddler: Towards Opportunities for Disadvantaged and Diverse Learners on Early Childhood- Road (2011-2013)
- 10.1. <http://www.uis.no/faculties-departments-and-centres/faculty-of-arts-and-education/department-of-early-childhood-education/projects/toddler/toddler-project-2011-2013/project-organization/>
- 10.2. The aim of the project was to show the educational potential of high quality education & care in center-based settings for toddlers, in particular for those from low education/low income/migrant families. Additionally the project raised awareness towards the educational benefits of high quality ECEC for toddlers at risk, it improved curriculum and teaching strategies of teacher education/in-service training.

#### Main Activities:

- Toddlers in European Context: initiation of a comparison of welcoming practices in early childhood settings in different European countries, analysis of different practices that allow the reduction of inequalities.
- Promoting the Well being of Toddlers' within Europe: Different approaches used by each partner country to promote the wellbeing of toddlers are investigated in a child-centred way.
- Promoting and Supporting Language Development in Multilingual and Multicultural Early Childhood Settings.
- Enhancing parental involvement: This course module is based on the work that was developed in the "Parental involvement" component of the TODDLER project, which focused on training of educators, technicians, future educators regarding the issue of parental involvement in contexts of reception they receive children under 3 years.  
[http://www.uis.no/getfile.php/13109026/HF/IBU/TODDLER/Dokumenter/Ku rsmateriale/Enhancing%20parental%20engagement\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.uis.no/getfile.php/13109026/HF/IBU/TODDLER/Dokumenter/Ku rsmateriale/Enhancing%20parental%20engagement_guidelines.pdf)

Video: Parental involvement: This DVD/film was made in connection to the

guideline book about “Parental Involvement in Toddler`s Education”. The concepts and the importance of parental involvement are presented there [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=fw0XewtuBpk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=fw0XewtuBpk)

### 11. After School / Social School for immigrant and refugee children (2014-)

<https://www.facebook.com/AfterSchoolSupportforMigrantRefugeeChildren/>  
The program the following activities take place:

Teaching Greek language to children and their parents once a week for 2 hours (everyday a different group)

- Informative meetings with parents and teachers-volunteers for the progress of their children
- Language exchange
- Job seminars

### 12. OECD Project: Innovative learning environments (ongoing)

<http://europaschule-linz.at>

Experimenting with innovative pedagogical approaches to respond to the learning needs of diverse student bodies. The Europaschule Linz, with a proportion of 40% immigrant students, has focused on providing positive learning environments for all students, by reducing age grouping, using small group settings, providing team teaching, individualising instruction and experimenting with innovative approaches such as “kids help kids” mentoring.

### 12. Mama lernt Deutsch (ongoing)

<http://www.vhs-interkulturell.at/de/mama-lernt-deutsch/>

The project "Mama learns German" aims at low-level promotion of the German language (levels A0, A1 and A2) and at the same time at the social participation of women (predominantly mothers) whose first language is not German.

### 14. Rucksack parents (ongoing)

<http://www.vhs-interkulturell.at/de/unsere-angebote/rucksack-projekt/>

The "Backpack" project is a parenting program aimed at empowering parents in their educational and educational skills. The parents, who mainly have a history of immigration, become experts in this program for their children. The parents are accompanied by a trained multilingual parental companion, who supports

them with educationally valuable materials in language education in the first and second language (German) and in the general development of their children (between 3 and 6 years). The individual measures take place from October to June, once a week (2.5 lessons), mainly in kindergartens but also in other educational institutions and cultural associations in Upper Austria.

### 15. Intercultural parents' café (ongoing)

<http://www.vhs-interkulturell.at/de/unsere-angebote/interkulturelles-elterncafe/>

The "Intercultural Parents Café" project is a parental education program aimed at empowering parents in their educational and educational skills as well as the dialogue between the school and parents.

### 16. Ready to hand (ongoing)

<http://www.vhs-interkulturell.at/de/unsere-angebote/griffbereit/>

The project "Griffbereit" (play groups) aims at the early childhood development and promotion of language skills in children with and without immigration history (between 1 and 3 years), as well as the competent support of parents in terms of parenting. Multilingualism is taken up as the potential of children. The individual measures take place from October to June, once a week (2.5 UE), mainly in cultural associations, but also in various educational institutions, Upper Austria.

### 17. FamilyEduNet (2014-2017)

<http://library.parenthelp.eu/family-training-course-guidelines/>

FamilyEduNet - Families for Educational Success (2014-2016) is a European project, financed by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, aiming at the upscaling of the successful XarxaClau project of FAPAC.

The objectives of the project are:

- to create a network of organisations to accompany, follow and train families in Actions for Educational Success (AES),
- to disseminate the scientific evidence that lead to AES to students' families and parents' associations in Europe,
- to train families in AES with special focus on families from a Roma background, living in rural area or having hospitalized children,

- to provide families and the educational community in general with participation tools to create a network of families to achieve educational success.

The main outputs of the project are

- an open online family training course
- guideline for training of families in AES

The course offers tools and inputs to understand and reinforce the role of parents in the achievement of educational success. Meanwhile, the handbook wants to go further, revealing the final objective, the added value of the course: highlighting the importance of networks between families and the educational community and families' organized forms. The tool that can channel all family and community efforts for educational success is the Successful Educational Plan (SEP). The SEP is a planning of Actions for Educational Success (AES). In this handbook we explain methodological patterns while also giving examples to support families and families' organization in this crucial process.

### 18. Birmingham Schools of Sanctuary (2014-)

<https://birmingham.cityofsanctuary.org/category/schools>

City of Sanctuary is a national movement to build a culture of hospitality for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. Its goal is to create a network of towns and cities throughout the UK which are proud to be places of safety, and which include people seeking sanctuary fully in the life of their communities. A 'City of Sanctuary' is a place where a broad range of local organizations, community groups and faith communities, as well as individuals are publicly committed to welcoming and including people seeking sanctuary.

Schools can sign up to be a 'School of Sanctuary' as a way of raising awareness regarding the challenges faced by newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers, as well as other migrant groups and as a statement of the school's inclusive attitudes and values. Schools can then, if they choose to, apply for a Schools of Sanctuary award in which they put together a portfolio of the work they have undertaken with regards to the inclusion of refugee and migrant children and parents, as well as organising workshops and speakers from the community. Some schools collaborate in the projects they are carrying out, and there is an emphasis on building collaborative partnerships with the local and wider

community, as well as taking a creative approach as to how they implement the values of the Sanctuary movement. This is not just for schools with large numbers of EAL students, but equally for those with few, in order to build awareness and respect amongst students and parents born in the UK. Whilst inclusion policies are an existing and integral aspect of UK schools, the Schools of Sanctuary status is a way of acknowledging what schools are already doing as well as celebrating this awareness.

19. “More Chances With Parents” (Meer Kansen Met Ouders) (ongoing)

<http://www.hco.nl/samen-met-ouders>

The project named “More Chances With Parents” (Meer Kansen Met Ouders) is meant to connect parents with their children’s school with the objective of helping and supporting their children with their education. School-parent relationships are essential in preventing absence and dropout. Measures to increase parental involvement: parents' council; parents' coordinator; contact-moments.

20. KAAP program of the city of Antwerp (ongoing)

<http://www.onderwijsantwerpen.be/nl/aanbod/schoolprojecten/kaap-voor-anderstalige-ouders>

The city of Antwerp has initiated the KAAP program: an embedded language course on the communication between parents and schools. The program is developed by The Center for Language and Education (university of Leuven). It is introduced in 5 Flemish cities. The City of Antwerp has taken ownership of the program and introduced it in their city.

KAAP offers an answer to problems of parents: learning about school and learning Dutch in a ‘safe’ environment.

21. Deutsch im Park (German in the Park) (2008-)

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/austria-deutsch-im-park-alternative-solution-learn-german>

Two German language courses on different levels and an alphabetisation course take place there three times a week in July. The trainers are young, qualified and enthusiastic people. The courses are addressed to visitors of the park who can’t speak German very well. These persons are often migrants or asylum seekers.

The aim of the project Deutsch im Park is to reach people who are not able/willing to visit a regular German language course.

### 22. European Literacy and Citizenship - Training for mixed audiences (ongoing)

<http://library.parenthelp.eu/training-mixed-audiences/>

To develop knowledge about active citizenship and European democracy, raising awareness of the importance of participation in democratic processes and developing skills for active, participative European citizens. Raising awareness about European democracy and skills development around that can support the democratic operation of schools and families and as a final goal can help schools and families in raising children of the present to become active European citizens of the future. The special organisation of mixed groups of professional and non-professional educators, school management and children is aiming at building mutual respect and mutual learning.

### 23. Change opportunities for Schools initiative - From Schools to Multifunctional Community Centers - an example from Latvia (2009-)

The goal of this initiative is to prevent threatening social disintegration by supporting revival and development of (small) schools and multifunctional community centres in economically and socially depressed areas (due to the financial crisis of 2008).

### 24. Gathered Together – Cruinn Còmhla (2014-2016)

<https://bemis.org.uk/project/gathered-together-cruinn-comhla/>

This new innovative approach is to encourage parents and carers from ethnic and cultural minorities throughout Scotland to come and be part of Parent Councils enabling wider parental participation in their children's education. The coordinators' mission is to promote inclusion and active citizenship for Ethnic Minority parents and carers, stimulating pro-active engagement in their children's education and advancing pathways to establishing closer relationships between home and the school community. The focus on initiating and sustaining such cooperation between parents, carers and parent councils is crucial to success in driving the desired enhancement of children's achievement and attainment.



25. Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships – Assessing partnerships in schools (ongoing)

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/title1/tech/module4/measurepartner.pdf>

This instrument helps assess whether a school is involving parents, community members, and students in meaningful ways. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement and focuses on how well activities are meeting challenges to involve more – or all – families in their children’s education.

26. Stichting Kleurrijke Scholen (Colourful Schools Foundation) (ongoing)

<http://www.kleurrijkescholen.nl/>

The Colourful Schools Foundation was founded by parents from all over the Netherlands to support other parents in mixing black and white neighbourhood schools. Parents put their children to school in groups with neighbours, so that after 2 to 3 years such a school becomes a reflection of the neighbourhood again. The quality of education often increases, not in the least because of the fresh and critical group of parents who follow the school closely. In this way, schools naturally become good neighbourhood schools, increasing the development opportunities for all children. The Colourful Schools Foundation wants to work together with parents on good neighbourhood schools and offers a support package to schools, municipalities and other stakeholders. For example, they help schools recruit pupils, organize school choice events, and give parents a voice in local education policy.

27. Wiltshire example - Report on the Pilot of a Toolkit for Parental Engagement

[http://opus.bath.ac.uk/55375/8/Report\\_on\\_the\\_Pilot\\_of\\_a\\_Toolkit\\_for\\_Parental\\_Engagement\\_final\\_.pdf](http://opus.bath.ac.uk/55375/8/Report_on_the_Pilot_of_a_Toolkit_for_Parental_Engagement_final_.pdf)

The toolkit is based around the general principles of organisational change and professional development for teaching staff. The first aim of the project was to examine the process involved in the toolkit, to understand if and how it helped schools move along the continuum of supporting parents to engage with the learning of their children. The second aim of the toolkit process was to support the home learning environment for pupils in the schools involved in the project, as a means of supporting achievement and narrowing the gaps in achievement between children from different backgrounds. One of the aims of this project

was to support schools to shift their understanding of work around parental engagement from a school centred model to one which embraced the value of the home learning environment. Schools worked together with other schools and shared good practice. The schools that benefitted most from this project incorporated the work from the toolkit into their school development/improvement plans.

### 28. EPIS - Mentoring Programs (2013-)

<https://www.epis.pt/mediadores/mentores#guioes>

Taking into account the successful results of the monitoring of about 12000 students, in 2013 EPIS launched the EPIS Mentors program. An initiative, that aims to help education professional from all over, to carry out a more effective and more efficient training work with more appropriate methodologies. This program includes scripts with guidelines for intervention for students, teachers, and the most relevant to the case, for parents. These scripts aim to present a package of strategies and intervention techniques useful to increase the effectiveness of the interventions by students, teachers and parents.

### 29. Programa de Competencia Familiar (PCF)- Strengthening Families Program (SFP) (2016-2018)

<http://competenciafamiliar.uib.es/programa/>

The "Competencias Familiares" Program is an adaptation of the Strengthening Families Program(SFP) which is a multi-component program with proven efficacy in the prevention of drug use and other behavioral problems. This program try to improve the parental competence, the social skills, and the behavior of the children, as well as the family relations.

Target population: The profile of the families that participates in the program is "high risk" .

### 30. Early Years Outreach Practice (2007)

[https://www.reyn.eu/app/uploads/2018/07/2007ey\\_outreach\\_practice.pdf](https://www.reyn.eu/app/uploads/2018/07/2007ey_outreach_practice.pdf)

Steps

0. Who in our local community is currently excluded from the services we offer for children in their early years?

1. How can we prepare the service?

2. Outreach service
3. Share our work and support other services to develop their practice and reach all children in the community

### 31. INCREDIBLE YEARS® - PARENT (ongoing)

<http://www.incredibleyears.com/>

The Incredible Years Series is a set of interlocking and comprehensive group training programs for parents, teachers, and children with the goal of preventing, reducing, and treating behavioral and emotional problems in children ages two to twelve. The series addresses multiple risk factors across settings known to be related to the development of conduct disorders in children. In all three training programs, trained facilitators use video scenes to encourage group discussion, self-reflection, modeling and practice rehearsals, problem-solving, sharing of ideas and support networks. Program descriptions of the teacher and child training components are available in separate write-ups. There are three BASIC parent training programs that target key developmental stages. Program length varies, but generally lasts between three to five months: Baby and Toddler Program (0-2 ½ years; 9-13 sessions), Preschool Program (3-5 years; 18-20 sessions) and School Age Program (6-12 years; 12-16+ sessions). These parent programs emphasize developmentally appropriate parenting skills known to promote children's social competence, emotional regulation and academic skills and to reduce behavior problems. The BASIC parent program is the core of the parenting programs and must be implemented, as Blueprints recognition is based upon evaluations of this program. This BASIC parent training component emphasizes parenting skills such as child directed play with children; academic, persistence, social and emotional coaching methods; using effective praise and incentives; setting up predictable routines and rules and effective limit-setting; handling misbehavior with proactive discipline and teaching children to problem solve.

### 32. Programa "educar en familia" (ongoing)

<http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/educacion/web/programas-redes-educativas/programas-educativos/familia-participacion/educar-en-familia.html>  
The program of "Family and educational participation" of the Ministry of Education and Universities of the Government of the Canary Islands in order to

develop the principle of participation in education improve the educational process to create active and responsible citizens.

It constitutes, therefore, a proposal to promote participation in the entire educational community in education and in the life of the educational centers, to achieve a quality, equitable and compensating school of inequalities, that responds to the demands of the 21st century, requires a leading role in the decisions that affect their sons and daughters. Finally, the development of the program becomes the main objective of the General Directorate of Educational Planning, Innovation and Promotion, that is, the universalization of school success, participation in a key factor to improve performance and reduction of school dropout. This training proposal is structured in cycles of three or four two-hour workshops or courses of six or eight hours, on various topics, with a clear practical and participatory dimension for families.

### 33. A Good Start Project (ongoing)

<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/good-start-eu-roma-pilot>

The 'A Good Start' project is funded by the European Union. The project supporting more than 4,000 children from ages zero to six to access early childhood education and care services in 16 locations across four countries (Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia).

### 34. Tallaght Roma Integration Project

The Tallaght roma integration project was created on the basis of a long consultation between public officials, NGO and the Roma community living in the wider area of Tallaght. The lack of access to health care has been a major concern for the Roma community members and it had an effect on all other aspects of their lives. The establishment of a Roma Primary Care Initiative , which has a dedicated Roma GP clinic and support service has been a major stepping stone in the development of a stronger and healthier community. It is important to keep in mind that to engage communities , one must meet the basic needs of that specific community. In working with vulnerable groups , this aspect is crucial. Therefore, identifying the needs has been a first step in this project, afterwards, a strong campaign to promote solidarity was made. Once, relevant data has been gathered, the project tried to respond to the needs of the communities by providing basic services and by involving the community in the problem definition and the problem solving process.

The premise of this model is that if basic needs of a vulnerable community reaches the ones that need it the most, then issues of access, inclusion, and cultural awareness need to inform how services are planned and delivered. The success of this alliance/coalition has a major significance in highlighting the importance of collaboration between mainstream services and the Roma community. Furthermore, it implies a wider applicability for various, concrete service development such as education or housing.

### 35. IncludedED (ongoing)

<http://creaub.info/included/>

INCLUD-ED analyses educational strategies that contribute to overcome inequalities and promote social cohesion, and educational strategies that generate social exclusion, particularly focusing on vulnerable and marginalised groups. Europe needs to identify these strategies that will in turn be used by policy makers, education managers, teachers, students and families, and contribute to shape new policies to meet the Lisbon goals. INCLUD-ED will be focused on the study of the interactions between educational systems, agents and policies, up to the compulsory level (i.e. pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, including vocational and special education programmes).

### 36. ParentHelp

<http://parenthelp.eu/>

Parents' Compass – supporting newly arrived migrants, especially parents and families to start their normal life

The core of the project is a multilingual website that collects basic information for parents offering help, and will also offer templates to be downloaded and printed with basic information in the languages of newly arrived migrants.

In most EU countries there is an obligation for parents to enrol their children in schools shortly after arriving to the country. Schools as education institutions are the best interface to also provide services to parents to support them in several areas, for example:

- understanding the school system and obligations for their children

- understanding social services and child support available for them
- how to use everyday services – housing, infrastructure (gas, electricity, internet, mobile), financial services (opening a bank account), health services, shopping, cultural offer, free time activities, etc.
- how to find employment, how to validate their skills
- social and family support available
- how special needs – physical, mental, dietary
- learning basic language of the hosting country
- providing for the basic right of the child to mother tongue and home culture

When entering the website first there will be a choice of country and then choice of language (national, Arabic, Pashto, Urdu...). All versions will contain downloadable information and also suggestions for tried and tested, as well as newly developed activities to involve the newly arrived parents, to support them to be involved in school life and also to help them get used to the new country. Activities will also be offered to help parents to provide for their children in mother tongue education and also home culture. When developing the activities part, we will rely on ALCUIN winner projects as a starting point. During the project some short-term trainings will also be organised for activists of parents' associations to exchange experiences and work out new activities together.

The project is carried out with financing from the Open Society Foundation as part of a group of projects supporting migrant children.



*School Parent Involvement to Increase  
Student Achievement*

[www.parentrus.eu](http://www.parentrus.eu)

